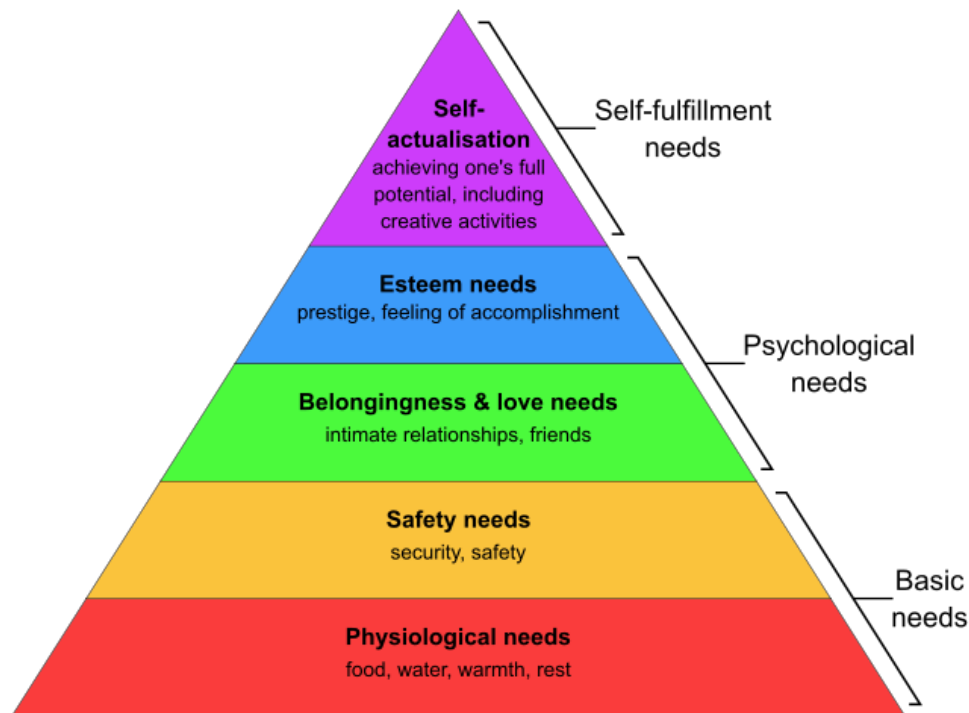


God is our source of worth and approval

Sunday, April 6, 2025



We all need to feel worthy, accepted, and that we're doing a good job. There can be two errors that can cause us a lot of anxiety and to make bad decisions.

One error is looking for these affirmations of worth, acceptance, and approval from other people. That will cause us to always seek to try to please people. Our actions will be controlled by them.

The other error is to stop caring about what other people think and just do whatever we want. This could be good, but we all have sinful natures and can deceive ourselves. Besides that, pride is a very dangerous thing. The original sin of the devil was pride, thinking that he knew better than God. Adam and Eve fell because the devil promised them that when they ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, then they would become like God. For the first time in their lives, they choose something contrary to the will of God—because of pride.

So, what is the right way to fulfill our needs for feeling worthy, accepted, and approved?

Just like we trust God for our basic needs like food and clothing, we can look to him for our need for love, belonging, and esteem. The more that you understand this, the freer you will be in your life. You will be able to make good decisions and relate to people in a proper and healthy way.

Worth and Acceptance

We all need to feel worthy and accepted. What makes you feel worthy? Your popularity at school, following on social media, the clothes you wear or the car you drive, how much money is in your bank account, your diploma, your title at work or what company you work for?

Let's take a look at the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man. Jesus was correcting the Pharisees' wrong values. They loved money.

Luke 16:19-31

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Jesus says that we must repent and put our trust in God in this life. But an interesting thing about this parable is that Lazarus is named, but the rich man is not. On earth, the rich man was very important and Lazarus was ignored. No one thought anything of him. But the situation was very different in eternity!

One thing that we can learn from this parable is that your worth is not determined by how "important" you are in this world. Your real situation has nothing to do with that. Your true worth is because you are a child of God.

John 1:12-13

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

In Christianity, we don't just acknowledge God as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but as our Father in heaven. When you put your trust in Him, you become His child. There's nothing you need to do to earn that position.

1 John 3:1

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! [NKJV]

We need to meditate on this truth! God loves you as His son or daughter. He is the perfect father. He loves you and accepts you. You belong to Him, and he is proud of your efforts. This is not self-help talk. Paul prayed that the Ephesians would have a greater revelation of God.

Ephesians 1:16-17

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Tell yourself these truths as often as you need to hear them. The Parable of the Prodigal Son shows us the extent of God's fatherly love. In that story, the father loved the younger son no matter what he did. He accepted Him without condition. He did not demote him to the status of a servant, but as a son. He put a ring on his finger and a robe on him. The younger son's worth was not dependent on anything that he did. (Nor was the older son's worth dependent on anything he did!)

As an aside, the greatest gift we fathers can give our children is this type of unconditional love and acceptance. Tell them that you are proud of them. That you love them and are glad that they are your son or daughter. God shows us how to do this; we should follow His example.

Approval

In addition to acceptance and worth, we need affirmation that we are doing a good job. Where do you look for approval? Your teachers, your parents, your boss, or your friends? If you approve of yourself, you might be self-deluded.

The church in Corinth was very immature. They were comparing themselves to others, and taking pride in one person over another, saying, “I follow Paul,” “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Peter.” Paul rebuked them, saying that all these leaders are just servants.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

Paul said what humans think doesn’t matter. He didn’t even accept his own judgement of himself! The best he could do was keep his conscience clear. What really mattered is what God had to say.

We relate to God as children to a father, but also as servants to a master. Our goal in life should be to live in such a way that when we meet Jesus, He says, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

2 Timothy 2:15

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

I admit that I really want people to like me. I want people to think that I’m doing a good job. I actually really dislike and resent this need that I have for other people’s approval. But this need for approval is not bad, it just needs to be directed at the right person—God.

Trying to please people is a trap! Don’t be controlled by the approval of others. You only have one Master in heaven.

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The good news is that Jesus is the best Master you could ever want. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. Sin is a hard master, paying you less and less the more and more you work. God

is generous and pays the best wages. And He also helps you in your work! He gives you strength and fills you with joy—real joy!

Ps. Lao has been preaching a series on how to please God. It boils down to this: Love God and love people. Learn to listen to the Holy Spirit. What is He telling you to do this week?

Sometimes when you obey God, people can see the results of that obedience. They can see you go to the fellowship or serve others. But sometimes, God tells you to obey Him in ways that no one will see. He asks you to forgive your enemies or to control your thoughts.

Don't compare yourself to other people. We all face different challenges in life. Each of us is given special tasks that are different from those given to other people. God knows what your race to run looks like. He wants you to be faithful with the tasks that He's given *you* and not to look at what tasks He's assigned to your brother or sister.

One last thing ... you still need to please other people. "What?! I thought you said we should not be people pleasers?!" Yes, you need to try to please people for the sake of the gospel. You should do everything you can to remove the stumbling blocks in front of the Big Stumbling Block, which is Jesus Himself. Don't make it harder than necessary for other people to put their trust in Jesus. Don't cause any of His little ones to fall away.

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Elsewhere, Paul says, "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." We do need to care about what other people think of us insofar as it brings them closer to God.

Matthew 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

If you put a Jesus fish sticker on your bumper, you better be polite on the road! When people look at your life, they should be able to see your good deeds so that they will think well of the God who you follow.

1 Peter 4:15-16

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Don't get into trouble for the wrong reasons.

To conclude, we all need to feel that we're worthy and accepted, and we need affirmation that we're doing a good job. We're worthy and accepted because God is our Father. We aim to please only one master, God. Our sense of worth, acceptance, and approval should come from God alone.